

Remarks:**Summary of the Office Action**

Claims 15-28 are pending.

In this Office Action, the drawings have been objected to under 37 C.F.R 1.83(a). Further, both the specification and the claims (18-28) have been objected to because of informalities. The Examiner indicates that these claims would be allowed once the claims, the specification and the drawings, have been suitable amended to overcome the cited objections.

Applicants' Reply

Applicants appreciate Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter in claims 15-28. Applicants have amended claims 15 and 23 to correct the informalities which were kindly noted by the Examiner.

Applicants respectfully traverse the objections to Drawings and the Specification. It is unclear whether the amendments and remarks presented by the applicants in the Reply to Office Action mailed 11/21/03 were considered in the Office Action of 2/23/04. Applicants therefore respectfully resubmit those remarks. Applicants, for example, resubmit that string 17 in Figure 1, which is a side view of a lute, is readily understood to represent any number of strings in a top view of the lute. Thus, it is not necessary to show lutes having specifically 8 or 15 strings (See Reply to Office Action mailed 11/21/03).

However, to expedite the issuance of the allowable claims, applicants propose additional FIGS. 5-7 and amend FIG. 4. A complete set of FIGS. 1-8 is enclosed.

Proposed Drawings

FIGS. 5-8 explicitly show features of claims 19, 22, 27 and 28 that were noted by the Examiner. In particular, FIG. 5 shows laths 29 running substantially parallel to the centerline (claim 19); FIG. 6 shows that the thickness of the face diminishes toward the rim (claim 22); FIGS. 7 and 8 shows eight- and fifteen- stringed lutes (claims 27 and 28, respectively). No new matter has been added.

With respect to the Examiner's comment that the claim 24 limitation of a "tunnel-shaped" recess should be shown in a drawing, applicants note that previously submitted FIG. 4 clearly shows a tunnel-shaped recess between lath 27 and a transverse rib 29 as described in the

specification [0027]. For further clarity, applicants propose to label the tunnel-shaped recess in FIG. 4 as element number 29'.

Further with respect to claim 24, applicants note that FIG. 4 shows abutment 34 proximate to rim 8 of back 7.

Amendments to the Specification

Applicants have amended the Description of the Drawings section to include descriptions of all FIGS 1-8.

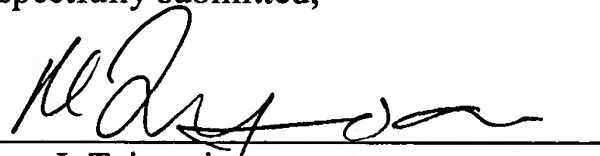
Further, applicants have amended paragraph [0042] to correct informalities and to clarify the description of parts 22 and 23, which the Examiner found to be indefinite and vague. This paragraph now includes a clear description of the nature of parts 22 and 23. Paragraph [0042] also makes reference to element 34 of FIG. 4. Applicants have also amended paragraph [0037] to make reference to element 33 of FIG. 3.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, reconsideration and allowance of claims 18-28 is respectfully requested.

If there are any remaining issues to be resolved, applicants request that the Examiner kindly contact the undersigned attorney for a telephone interview in order to advance the allowance of this case.

Respectfully submitted,



Manu J. Teiwani
PTO Reg. No. 37,952
Attorney for Applicants
Baker Botts LLP
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, NY 10112
(212) 408-2614